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Subjectification, Intersubjectification and Grammaticalization

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The semantic-pragmatic development of *well* from the viewpoint of (inter)subjectification

The Deform

Abstract

Previous research on the semantic-pragmatic evolution of *well* has mainly focused on the functional development of manner adverbs towards pragmatic markers placed in utterance-initial position (Finell 1989; Jucker 1997). The complex relationship between *well* as a pragmatic marker and its propositional source has been subject to a gradual non-straightforward diversification (e.g. Traugott and Dasher 2002). According to Traugott's hypotheses (1999), adverbial *well* could be expected to have followed a historical development from propositional, over textual, to interpersonal meanings – with an increase in subjectivity and intersubjectivity. In order to gain a more complete understanding of how the functional development of *well* has occurred, and how various propositional uses have influenced the development of subjective meanings, this paper aims to examine the semantic-pragmatic uses of *well* in the historical data from the *Helsinki Corpus of English texts* (HC) and the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (SAMPLER) (CEECs). More specifically, different shades of meaning of propositional *well* will be considered – as a source for historical speaker-based and hearer-oriented pragmatic development. Secondly, two frequently occurring collocations of *well* will be examined against the background of increasing subjectivity and epistemicity.

1. Introduction

1.1. Aims and research material

The historical development of propositional adverbs into pragmatic markers has received a fair amount of attention in recent years (see Schiffrin 1992 on *then*; Powell 1992 on stance adverbs; Aijmer 2002; and Traugott and Dasher 2002 among others). Diachronic hypotheses state that pragmatic markers which have evolved out of adverbials, such as *well* and *now*, are still coloured by their original propositional meanings. According to various hypotheses, manner adverbs are predicted to undergo an evolution from

propositional meanings to more expressive and subjective meanings, i.e. from referential meanings to abstract discourse meanings with a wider scope (see Traugott 1995b) and a greater speaker-oriented perspective. It has been shown, however, that there is no such thing as a straightforward development from adverb to pragmatic marker (Schourup 2001; Traugott and Dasher 2002 among others). Jucker (1997 – see also Schourup 2001; Traugott and Dasher 2002) has attested that adverbial *well* has undergone a gradual functional diversification, and that the many pragmatic meanings of the present-day marker still show ties with adjectival and adverbial meanings of *well*.

On the basis of a historical corpus study, this paper examines to what extent the pragmatic diversification of *well* can be explained against the background of hypotheses of grammaticalization, subjectification and intersubjectification, and whether we can trace diverging developments in the marker's semantic-pragmatic history. My aim is to look at the historical development which *well* has undergone, and to examine to what extent the marker's syntactic position has had an influence on the semantic-pragmatic meanings of *well*. A second focus will be on the pragmatic influence which *well* fulfils in two frequently occurring collocations, viz. with cognitive verbs (e.g. *you know well that...*) and with modal auxiliaries (e.g. *you may well see that...*). Various contextual factors will be taken into account, such as sentence position, relative frequencies and the relationship between speaker and addressee. We will see that the additional use of *well* can serve a subjective function in contexts where speaker and addressee have diverging opinions, and that the adverbial use of *well* can be used pragmatically to fulfil intensified and modal meanings. The data will attest to what extent *well* presents a valuable element in the positioning of the speaker and the acknowledgement of the addressee. For each example dated before 1500 used in this paper, a translation of the entire utterance or of relevant parts is given.

The findings discussed in this paper result from research on two historical corpora, namely the diachronic part of the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* (HC) and the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (Sampler) (CEECS). The HC consists of a collection of extracts of continuous text, taken from a wide range of different genres and covering the period between Old English (c. 850) and c. 1710. The corpus contains approximately 1.6 million words. The CEECS is a letter corpus which runs from 1417 to 1681. The corpus contains 23 letter collections and a total of 450,000

words.¹ The HC and CEECS are important methodologically because they contain “speech-related” genres. The HC for instance includes a certain percentage of dramatic constructions of speech (e.g. plays or sermons) or reconstructed recordings of speech (e.g. trial proceedings or witness accounts) – balanced by less speechlike, written genres (e.g. law documents). As a letter corpus, the CEECS also offers a valuable source of genre data. Letters, particularly private letters “contain many interactional features such as address terms, directives, politeness markers, apologies, and so on” (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 8). Because pragmatic markers are more frequent in oral discourse and it has only recently been made possible to record spoken data (see Culpeper and Kytö 1997, 2000), the text types in these historical corpora come as close as possible to “natural” spoken interaction of previous centuries.

Although synchronic and diachronic corpora are “assumed to be representative” of a certain language or language period (Francis 1982: 7), the linguistic domain they cover remains limited in the sense that it is hardly possible to achieve a complete level of equal distribution with regard to time periods, dialect, or text type. If this is difficult for synchronic data, it poses even more difficulties for historical periods. The compilers of the HC and CEECS have aimed to achieve different kinds of representativeness – “chronological, regional, sociolinguistic and generic”, with an emphasis on sociolinguistic coverage for the CEECS. We need to take into account that frequencies of pragmatic markers will be influenced by differences in genre representation. Palander-Collin (1999) points out, for example, that the phrase *I think* has a speech-based nature and was found to be much more frequent in private letters than in non-private letters. Inevitable differences in representativeness should therefore be kept in mind when considering quantitative or qualitative corpus results. Genre-related differences are not the main focus in this paper – the examples that are selected belong to a variety of (speech-related) genres, and only when relevant will the genre of the illustration be discussed. Apart from a reference to the corpus, the date and abbreviated file name, the genre of the excerpt is added between brackets after each example from the *Helsinki Corpus*. Examples from the CEECS all belong to the genre of (private) letters. The influence of genre

1. Both historical corpora are taken from the ICAME cd-rom (the *International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English*). Further information on the HC and the CEECS can be found on <<http://hmt.hiit.uib.no/icame/manuals>> (last accessed on 1/04/2009). For the CEECS, also see Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1996.

differences on semantic-pragmatic meanings of *well* will be discussed more extensively in future publications.

1.2. Terminology

Many different terms have been used to refer to the elements of speech known as *pragmatic markers* (Brinton 1996), *discourse markers* (Jucker 1997; Fraser 1999), *discourse particles* (Aijmer 2002) or *discourse operators* (Schourup 1999). In this paper I will use the term *pragmatic marker* (see Brinton 1996 for a list of defining features) as a general, encompassing term for those items which do not contribute to the propositional contents of an utterance, and which predominantly occur utterance-initially, more particularly in the "pre-front" field (Auer 1996). Subclassifications can be made on the basis of formal or functional criteria, which can clarify the differences between for instance (modal) adverbs (e.g. *certainly*, *surely*), pragmatic expressions or particles (Hoye 1997: 212; Aijmer, Foolen and Simon-Vandenberg 2006). A general denotation with subdivisions allows for a more specific delineation of various forms and uses. *Discourse markers*, for instance, are considered to be a specific subclassification focusing on text-structuring functions, i.e. on how interactants structure discourse. In this article, the term *particle* is reserved for reference to *modal particles*.

2. Synchronic functions of *well*

The discourse functions of *well* in present-day English have been the subject of a number of studies (Lakoff 1973; Svartvik 1980; Watts 1986; Schiffrin 1987; Schourup 2001 among others). Research on the semantic-pragmatic uses of *well* shows that the marker is often used in the context of a confrontation between speaker and addressee and that *well* can be applied to create or restore coherence. According to Jucker's division (1997, synchronic *well* can be classified according to four main pragmatic uses (table 1).

Table 1. Functional classification of *well* (Jucker 1997: 92)

function	level	label
adverb, adjective	propositional	–
discourse marker	textual	frame marker
discourse marker	interpersonal	face-threat mitigator
discourse marker	interpersonal	qualifier
discourse marker	interpersonal	pause filler

The main textual function of *well* as a frame-marker allows the speaker to create textual coherence by indicating topic changes or by introducing direct reported speech (see examples 1 and 2). In example (1), *well* forms a frame between two subtopics, uttered by the same speaker (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg 2003: 1142).

- (1) "Well, where'd you sleep last night?" the woman said softly. "You get kicked out?" (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg 2003: 1142)
- (2) And he said *well* tell me something about rickets. (Jucker 1997: 93)

On an interpersonal level, *well* expresses attitudes or creates common ground between speaker and addressee. Jucker distinguishes three interpersonal meanings for *well*. As a face-threat mitigator, the marker can be used in situations where the addressee's face (or that of the speaker) is threatened. In this case, *well* serves as a means to prevent face loss.

- (3) A: I didn't know there was such a job going
B: [uhuh]
well there was about a year ago now
they had a first batch... – and then a second batch ...
(Jucker 1997: 93)

Secondly, *well* can be used as a qualifier when a respondent is unable to give a reply which is – in the speaker's or the addressee's eyes – "sufficient" or when he or she cannot seem to give an answer which is "optimally coherent with the preceding question" because the respondent cannot supply the requested information (Schiffrin in Jucker 1997: 94).

(4) A: *Are you from Philadelphia?*

B: *Well I grew up uh out in the suburbs. And then I lived for about seven years up in upstate New York. And then I came back here I go to college.*
(Schiffrin 1987: 106)

A third interpersonal function according to Jucker's research is the use of *well* as a pause filler, which enables a speaker to 'bridge interactional silence' in situations where he or she wants to keep the floor.

(5) *yes ... quite ... well there you are ... you see ... em – it's an obvious – x application* (Jucker 1997: 95) [adapted]

3. Historical development of the pragmatic marker

3.1. Grammaticalization and (inter)subjectification

Previous studies have shown that the present-day multifunctionality of *well* can be traced back to propositional (adverbial or adjectival) functions with the meaning 'in a good way or manner, according to a certain standard' (Finell 1989; Jucker 1997; Schourup 2001 among others). However, Schourup stresses that the 'marker *well*' has [...] properties that cannot be predicted on the view that the marker is simply an adverb called into illocutionary service' (2001: 1038). The relationship between adverbial *well* – as in 'He plays the guitar well' – and a pragmatic use of *well* – e.g. 'Well, let me see' – is 'far more tenuous' (Schourup 2001: 1038). An explanation for the present-day relationship between form and functions, and between original propositional meanings and present-day pragmatic functions of *well* may be found in the historical process of grammaticalization. Traugott (1995a: 15) defines grammaticalization as 'the process whereby lexical material in highly constrained pragmatic and morphosyntactic contexts becomes grammatical, and already grammatical material become[s] more grammatical' (see also Traugott 1995b, 1997).

Grammaticalization involves changes through which an element can gain increased scope or increased syntactic freedom, while at the same time the element's position becomes more restricted in the sense that its position becomes 'more clearly defined in its syntagmatic relation to other sentence elements' (Palander-Collin 1999: 50). Apart from grammatical or syntactic

changes, grammaticalization can also cause linguistic elements to lose semantic meaning and to gain pragmatic strength – evolving from propositional meanings, over text-structuring to increasingly interpersonal functions according to a unidirectional cline. In recent studies (Traugott 1999), more emphasis has been placed on an increase in expressiveness and subjectivity. According to these hypotheses, a propositional manner adverb such as *well* can develop abstract pragmatic meanings which are increasingly grounded in the speaker's perspective. Grammaticalization can be motivated by the speaker's need to communicate attitudes and personal opinions. The processes that support this need are called *subjectification* and *intersubjectification* and entail the recruitment of propositional material for subjective and intersubjective purposes. *Subjectification* (Traugott 1995b, 1997) causes meanings to 'shift toward greater subjectivity [and] become increasingly associated with speaker attitude' (Traugott 1995a: 2) and can be defined more specifically as 'the process whereby meanings come over time to index, encode, and externalize the speaker/writer's perspectives and attitudes' (Schwenter and Traugott 2000: 10).

Intersubjectification, which is generally preceded by *subjectification* and cannot occur without it (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 97), highlights the other end of the speech event and is 'a mechanism whereby meanings become more centered on the addressee' (Traugott 1999: 3). As such, *intersubjectification* is described as 'the explicit expression of SP/W's attention to the 'self' of AD/R in both an epistemic sense, paying attention to their (likely) attitudes to the content of what is said, and in a more social sense (paying attention to 'face' or 'image needs')' (Traugott 1999: 2).

Traugott (this volume) stresses that both *subjectification* and *intersubjectification* are processes that are independent of the process of grammaticalization, but that there is definitely a close interaction between *subjectification* and grammaticalization because the latter involves the development of (pragmatic) markers towards the ideational component of discourse structuring and/or towards text-structuring functions.

An example of pragmatically motivated change is the evolution of *indeed* (Traugott 1995a: 7–9; Aijmer 2002: 16f.). In origin a prepositional phrase, *indeed* ('in deed') moved away from a clause-internal adverbial form towards a (modal) sentence adverbial – with the epistemic (modal) meaning 'certainly' (Traugott 1995a: 8). Through further development on the adverbial cline, *indeed* shifted to clause-initial position and acquired meanings expressing 'elaboration and clarification of the [the speaker's] discourse intent' (Traugott 1995b: 11).

Semantic-pragmatic change and (inter)subjectification are dynamic processes. As historical phenomena, these processes nevertheless result in synchronic layers of functional split for one particular item. The co-existence of different variants [$A > A \sim B > B$], which may or may not replace older meanings, is called "layering" (Hopper 1991). By tracing different steps in the semantic-pragmatic evolution of *well* we are able to gain a clearer picture of how different layers of functional split can be compared, and how propositional meanings have evolved towards a diversity of pragmatic and (inter)subjective uses.

3.2. The historical evolution: Previous research

Although previous studies by Finell (1989), Jucker (1997), Schourup (2001) and Traugott and Dasher (2002) have established a connection between the semantic-pragmatic development of *well* and a propositional source, the marker's evolution is not transparent. According to Finell (1989), who studied *well* in responses, early propositional uses of *well* as a predicative adjective can be seen as precursors for later interpersonal functions. She considers the following use of adjectival *well* to be the earliest context for the marker's further pragmatic evolution.

- (6) *And where as they saye that the Gospell must be taught after the interpretations approued by the church (that is very well) but all the snyfe is, which is the trewe church.* (OED, *well* – 1560, taken from Finell 1989: 655).

In the following example, *well* can be seen as an abbreviated form of the phrase *that is very well*.

- (7) Cloten: *Nay, come, let's go together.*
Second Lord: *Well, my lord.*
(Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, qtd. Schourup 2001: 1049)

Schourup (2001: 1049) states that these meanings are now obsolete but that their use expressed consent or agreement, and that they illustrated a particularly strong semantic connection between propositional and pragmatic functions. Placed in utterance-initial position, adjectival *well* allows the speaker to express "acceptance of a situation" or acceptance of a pre-

vious speaker turn. As in example (7), the central positive meaning of propositional *well* can then be used as a starting point for additional disagreeing or concessive comments (*that is very well, but...*). It is this combination of acceptance and concession which recurs in present-day interpersonal uses of *well*, as in example (8).

- (8) *Are you coming to the lecture? – Well, I'd like to, but I'm afraid I can't today.* (Finell 1989: 655)

In conformity with Traugott's hypotheses on shifts of meaning and subjectification, Finell finds that *well* evolved from a predicative adjective to an expressive, independent part of the sentence. Jucker expands this point of view by stating that propositional (adjectival or adverbial) uses are not "sufficiently transparent as being the origins of the discourse meanings of *well*" (1997: 107). Finell's study does not take into consideration the possibility that interpersonal pragmatic uses in present-day English may have a more textual function as a precursor. All Jucker's early examples from Middle English place *well* in a context of direct reported speech, accompanied by a verb of speaking (see examples 9 and 10).

- (9) "Ye sey well," seyde the kynge. "Aske what ye woll and ye shall have hit and hit lye in my power to gyff hit." "Well," seyde thys lady, "than I aske the hede of thys knyght that hath womne the swerde..." (HC *Camelot* 1470 [Romances] – Jucker 1997: 99).
... "Ask what you will and you shall have it if it lies in my power to give it." "Well", said this lady, "then I ask the head of this knight who has taken the sword..."
(10) "Howe say you, mistris Alice," quoth he, "is it not so?"
"Bone deus, bone deus, man, will this geare neuer be lefte?" quoth shee.
"Well then, mistris Ales, if it be so," quoth he, "it is very well..." (HC, *Cebiol* [Biography]: 1500–1570)

Jucker's historical data illustrate a "continuous [pragmatic] diversification" from the Middle English period onwards, starting with this predominantly textual function. This frame-marker use becomes more versatile in later periods, occurring also without communicative verbs. In late Early Modern English, pragmatic *well* is then seen to adopt new meanings – e.g. as an interpersonal face-threat mitigator. The functions of qualifier and pause

filler were unattested in Jucker's data and are therefore likely to have originated in later, post-Shakespearean periods.²

Although Jucker's and Finell's data validate Traugott's evolution from propositional – via textual – to interpersonal functions, the Old English form *wella* suggests that an interpersonal element may lie at the basis of further developments of *well*. Research by Van Herreweghe (2003) states that the development of *well* as a discourse marker can to a certain extent be related to Old English *wella* or *wel la*. *Wella* is an Old English discourse marker which mainly served as an indicator of positive appraisal or as an attention-getting device, i.e. an interpersonal function. Although *wella* did not continue to exist in this particular form, Van Herreweghe suggests that a possible blending of forms may connect adverbial or adjectival meanings of *well* with Old English *wella*, as well as with other forms such as Old English *weg la* or *wa la* ("alas").³ This possible connection again draws attention to the fact that already in its earliest developments, *well* essentially had an interpersonal element in its core meaning.

Secondly, in considering the early textual functions of *well* – in the context of a quotation – we need to keep in mind that calling something *well*, i.e. good, in a good manner, is in itself already a subjective, evaluative act because it entails that the speaker is matching the situation against a certain norm or standard. It is clear that

[*well*] functions as a frame marker and text-sequencing device, but in many cases it may also indicate an acceptance of a situation that has been expressed or indicated, and thus it may already have some interpersonal significance besides its mainly textual function. (Jucker 1997: 99)

Initially captured in a textual frame (quotation), *well* signals that the speaker finds that "the interlocutor *has got a point*" (Finell 1989: 655).

2. As pointed out by one of the anonymous referees, the absence of the function of pause filler might partly be attributed to the fact that spoken language is often rendered into written language in an idealized way.
3. Jucker (1997) and Van Herreweghe (2003) found that certain uses of *wella* have been translated as 'alas', which may seem at odds with the generally positive semantics of *well(a)*. Jucker suggests that translators perhaps did not have an appropriate word for the translation of *wella*, while Van Herreweghe mentions a possible connection with Latin (*e/heu*, which is an interjection of pain or grief. A related expression of sorrow still exists today – though obsolete – in the form of *wellaway* (i.e. originally a combination of *wel(l)* and *away*).

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the diachronic data from the HC and CEECS indicates that the historical evolution of *well* largely follows Jucker's findings in the sense that most of the corpus tokens before 1500 (9 out of 10) are found in a textual frame of direct reported speech. After further examination of all utterance-initial tokens of *well* in the historical corpora, paying specific attention to the ways in which *well* interacts with the speaker's need to express personal stance and create interpersonal ties with the interlocutor, we can see that the sense of acceptance signalled by *well* is increasingly followed by a personal – concessive or diverging – point of view, indicating that the speaker "is not prepared to completely comply with the interlocutor" (Finell 1989: 655) (examples 11 and 12).

- (11) Miss.: *That's my best Nurse, do as you wou'd be done by; trust us together this once...*
Nurse: *Well, this once I'll venture you; but if you disparage me...*
(HC, Ceplay3a [Drama, Comedies]: 1640–1710)
- (12) *Leave her company keitha? Alas poore soule, this reward she hath for her good will. I wis I wis, she is more your friend, then you are your owne.*
Well let her be what she will sayd her husband: but if shee come any more in my house, shee were as good no. And therefore take this for a warning I would advise you: and so away he went.
(HC, Cefict 2b [Fiction]: 1570–1640)

The data from the HC and CEECS attest that *well* is increasingly used in contexts where speaker and addressee have diverging views or need to reach a source of common ground – as in the examples above. Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg (2003) underline the fact that the central positive sense of *well* makes it a valuable element in interaction and "interactively useful in cases where speakers are aware of possibly divergent interpretations" (2003: 1129).

Whereas early examples of *well* mainly indicated the acceptance of a situation (as an indication of a "positive judgement"), it seems that most tokens of *well* in corpus examples before ca. 1500 are increasingly followed by a personal elaboration, thought or modification (often differing from the point of view of the addressee). The sense of "acceptance" expressed in earlier, more transparent and propositional uses of *well* now seems to become oriented towards acknowledging a previous speaker turn for the benefit of the addressee, as in (13) and (14). These examples show

that acceptance not necessarily implies actual belief of what is said. Both examples are excerpts from trial proceedings, in which the speaker's consideration of preceding information is central, and forms the basis for a continuation of the dialogue. The interrogates' answers are acknowledged, but not recognized as indisputable.

- (13) L. C. J.: *Did you lie with them?*
 Dunne: *No, my Lord, I did not.*
 L. C. J.: *Well, I see thou wilt answer nothing ingenuously, therefore I will trouble my self no more with thee: Go on with your Evidence, Gentlemen.*
 (HC, Cetr3b [Proceedings, trials]: 1640–1710)
- (14) A: *Nay (quoth [the earl]) it is now not tyme to answer vpon thinkinge, did you indeede so counsell me?*
 (B:) *he answered: "I did".*
 A: *The E. pausing as it were in a wonder replied thus. Well, let his lyfe and my death witness howe truly he speaks. Then was agayne wrged the Consultation at Drevvery house,....*
 (HC, Cetr2a [Proceedings, trials]: 1570–1640)

The positive adverbial sense is thus used strategically as a defence against possible face loss, and allows the speaker to develop a possible divergent argument. Schourup (2001) has called the present-day use of *well* “epistemic” in the sense that the marker indicates that the speaker looks back and expresses consideration of a previous utterance – “actively taking into account what is already known or assumed” (2001: 1043) and “[granting] what is (though not necessarily approving of it)” (Schourup 2001: 1049). To some extent, this is already noticeable in example (13), where *well* results from speaker A's evaluation of the previous speaker turn.

The historical corpus data illustrate an evolution where *well* initially has a propositional significance (*that is well; If this is so, then...*). This layer of meaning continues to be used in later data, but *well* also evolves towards a semantically weakened use which can serve to acknowledge the addressee and which is increasingly positioned in the speaker's subjective perspective and in a personal discourse dialectic.

4. Adverbial *well*: Increase in speaker-perspective

4.1. Layers of adverbial meaning

Jucker (1997: 99) notes that several senses of the adverb *well* were already firmly established in Middle English. Although these cannot be called direct, transparent origins of present-day interpersonal functions, they may have served as precursors for later – textual – functions. Jucker lists three meanings (1997: 99–100):

- (i) in a way appropriate to the facts and circumstances; fittingly, properly (OED2, *well* adv., 5)
- (ii) with good reason; naturally; as a natural result or consequence (OED2, *well* adv., 8a)
- (iii) clearly, definitely, without any doubt or uncertainty (OED2, *well* adv., 14a)

Interestingly, as Jucker points out, meaning (i) occurs mainly with verbs of saying or speaking, as in

- (15) *Diet is wel cweden swa gewritu secgað, þæt...* (a900 Cynewulf Christ 547 – Jucker 1997: 99).
 ‘That is **well** said, as the book says, that...’

The importance of this co-occurrence lies in the fact that the early textual functions of *well* – for which these adverbial meanings can be seen as predecessors – were all accompanied by a communicative verb (e.g. “Well,” seyde thys lady, ‘than I aske the hede of...’), as attested in Jucker's data and confirmed in the historical material from the HC and CEECS. We can relate this to the fact that the utterance-initial use of “Well...” can in some cases be paraphrased as “that is well” or “that is well said”, and in that sense functions as an acceptance of the previous speaker turn. It appears that the interpretation of the semantic-pragmatic value of *well* depends at least partly on the marker's verbal collocates and on the positional relationship between verb and adverb. Before considering the idea that there may be a correlation between grammatical context (position, verb type) and level of (inter)subjectivity, we need to take into account the fact that adverbial *well* in itself displays a wide range of meanings – clearly propositional, but also more subjective and even epistemic meanings.

The following examples (taken from the Middle English Dictionary Online [MED]) define *well* as a manner adverb indicating that when some-

thing is "done well", it is "done in accordance with a good or high standard of conduct or morality" (MED *wel*, adv. 1a; example 16 below), "in a way appropriate to the facts or circumstances" (e.g. with verbs of speaking; example 17 below), or in accordance with the standards of an art, a craft or a profession (MED *wel*, adv. 5a; example 18 below). These propositional meanings are largely contextual.

- (16) **Do(n) well, live(n) well** (Active/virtuously, in accordance to God's will):
 E.g. *For when they doe well or ill the praise or blame will be laid there.* (HC, Ceeduc3a, 1640–1710)
- (17) **Speak well** (= speak eloquently)
 E.g. *Now also I schall speke of...the Gerneres Joseph that he leet make for to kepe the greynes for the perile of the dere yeres. And thei ben made of ston, full wel made of Masounes craft.* (HC, Cmandev, 1350–1420)
- (18) **Make...well** (Make...in accordance with the standards of a craft):
 E.g. *Now also I schall speke of...the Gerneres Joseph that he leet make for to kepe the greynes for the perile of the dere yeres. And thei ben made of ston, full wel made of Masounes craft.* (HC, Cmandev, 1350–1420)
- ...And they are made of stone, full wel made through the skills of a mason.'

Apart from the "standard" manner meaning, i.e. "in a good manner, according to a standard", propositional *well* can be used in a more emphatic or intensified use, indicating degree (rather than manner).

- (19) **So wel she loved clemesse and eke trouthe.** (MED *wel*, adv. 14a – c 1430) (= greatly, devotedly)
 'So greatly she loved cleanliness and also faithfulness.'
- (20) **Wile thou wel that in the last dayes schal come perilous tymes.** (MED *wel*, adv. 14a – c ?1387) (= assuredly)
 'Be assured that in the last days perilous times shall come.'
- (21) **Knownen well** (= in depth, with great familiarity):
 E.g. *I wot wel thi werkis.* (MED *wel*, adv. 11a – 1400)
 'I know your doings well.'

A third type of meaning for *well* was already mentioned as one of the established meanings of *well* in Middle English (Jucker 1997 – see above: meaning iii). This use of *well*, i.e. "clearly, definitely, without any doubt or uncertainty" (OED2, *well* adv., 14a) represents a more subjective, epistemic use of the adverb – as illustrated in the following examples (22–24).

- (22) *He seep timentoures on enery syde bisette to do hym woo, as he hap wel deserved.* (MED *wel*, adv. 14a (d) – a1450) (with verbs denoting obligation, deserving: duly, indeed)
 'He sees torturers [placed] on every side to do him harm, as he has well deserved.'
- (23) *Swich a noble theatre as it was I dar wel seyn in this world theres.* (MED *wel*, adv. 14a – c1385)
 'Such a noble theatre as it was, I dare well say there was none (i.e. not a similar one) in this world.'
- (24) *Well may he be a kyngys son, for he hath many good taccchis.* (MED *wel*, adv. 15a – a1470) (= possibly, likely – intensified sense of likelihood)
 'He may well be a king's son, for he has many good characteristics.'

The notion of *epistemicity* is "concerned with knowledge and belief (as opposed to fact)" (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 106). More specifically, epistemic expressions illustrate the speaker's point of view with regard to the truth of a proposition. Epistemicity can be expressed by means of pragmatic markers (e.g. *in fact*), adverbs of modality (*probably*) or modal verbs (*You must be tired*).

If we consider these three levels of meaning, we see that the degree of speaker-intrusion or subjectivity remains fairly limited in the "clear" propositional uses. In epistemic uses of the adverb however, a greater level of speaker-attitude or interpersonal expression becomes visible. The dividing line between "clear" propositional uses, intensifying forms, and epistemic meanings of *well* is fairly thin and seems to depend mainly on the accompanying verbs. In order to attest whether there is a correlation between different forms of adverbial *well* and an increase in (inter)subjectivity, the next sections will discuss two of the most frequently occurring correlations in the historical corpus data, namely the co-occurrence of *well* with mental verbs and with epistemic modals.

4.2. Semantic field types: Mental verbs

As will be shown in this section, adverbial *well* illustrates a high level of co-occurrence with verbs of cognition in particular. In order to attest to what extent this collocation influences a possible evolution towards in-

creased subjectivity, the correlation between contextual factors (e.g. semantic verb fields; subject forms; positional differences) and levels of (in)ter)subjectivity in the historical corpus data is discussed here.

4.2.1. Classification

Lexical verbs can be categorized according to a number of different semantic fields. In order to establish quantitative and qualitative distinctions between different semantic patterns, all verbs co-occurring with adverbial *well* in the historical corpus data were classified accordingly. A quantitative and qualitative study of typical – verbal – patterns in which *well* is used in the corpus data points out that adverbial *well* (modifying a verb) accounts for up to 60% of all tokens of *well* in the HC and CEECS. *Well* appears 602 times as a Verbal Adverb (VAdv) in the CEECS (on a total of 1064 *well*-tokens, i.e. 56.6%) and 1909 times in the HC (on a total of 3088, i.e. 61.8%). The verbs in this category were divided according to the semantic verb field they belong to based on a classification into seven categories taken from Biber et al. (1999: Section 5.1).⁴ Illustrations of each category are given below:

- (i) Activity:⁵ e.g. *make, buy, work, carry, wear, open.*

E.g. ... *he shall now pay your mastership well and sufficiently*
(CEECS, Stonor; 1424–1483)

‘... he shall now pay your mastership well and sufficiently’

4. Many lexical verbs can be called ambiguous in the sense that they can be placed into more than one semantic verb category. Verbs such as *revisit, obey* or *follow* (*a command or law*), for instance, seemed to fit both into the cognitive and activity verb categories. Moreover, it is possible for one single verb to display different meanings, consequently fitting into different categories (e.g. *deserve* can be categorized as either cognitive or existential, depending on context; see Biber et al. 1999: 367–371). In order to create a consistent categorisation, all entries were classified on the basis of their individual contexts.
5. Activity verbs are verbs which ‘primarily denote actions and events that could be associated with choice’, e.g. *come, bring, leave, run, take, work* (Biber et al. 1999: 361).

- (ii) Mental:⁶ e.g. *think, love, know, want, believe, read.*

E.g. *Whan Melibee hadde herd the wordes of his wyf Prudence, he seyde thus: “I se wel that the word of Salomon is sooth.”* ... (HC, Cmcetpros; 1350–1420)

‘When Melibee had heard the words of his wife Prudence, he spoke thus: “I see well that the word of Salomon is true.”’

- (iii) Communication: e.g. *say, tell, show, suggest, thank, write.*

E.g. *Yif me gold and oþer fe. þat Y mowe riche be, ... for þu ful wel biþet me þonne I last spak with þei* (HC, Cmhavelo; 1250–1350)

‘Give me gold and other (lit.) property, (so) that I may be rich, ... for you full well promised me when I last spoke with you.’

- (iv) Existence: e.g. *represent, include, involve, indicate, seem, live.*

E.g. ... *and very true it was they did all acknowledge, that her highnes had shewed herself a most loving princeesse and neighbour to them, as did well appeer to their ambassadors in England* ... (CEECS, Leycester; 1585–1586)

- (v) Occurrence: e.g. *change, grow, develop, occur, become, happen.*

E.g. ... *þei takeþ cold water & salt to-geder & waschip ouer-al & froþþ him wel. ... & so wol þe swellinge aswage wel* [enough]. (HC, Cmhorses; 1350–1420)

‘... they take cold water and salt together and wash (him) all over and rub him well ... and so the swelling will be well [enough] reduced.’

6. Mental verbs ‘denote a wide range of activities and states experienced by humans; they do not involve physical action and no not necessarily entail volition. ... They include both cognitive meanings (e.g. *think* or *know*) and emotional meanings expressing various attitudes or desires (e.g. *love, want*), together with perception (e.g. *see, taste*) and receipt of communication (e.g. *read, hear*)’ (Biber et al. 1999: 362–363). Mental verbs include dynamic verbs (*examine, discover*) but also verbs that are more stative in meaning (e.g. *believe, know, remember, understand*).

- (vi) Causative: e.g. *allow, cause, enable, help, require, let.*

E.g. *His Highness also well allowed that your Grace motteth not onely remisse dealing, but also some suspitione in that the Lord Dacre so litle esteemed the mynde and opinion of the Kings sister ...* (HC, Ceoffiel; 1500–1570)

- (vii) Aspectual: e.g. *start, keep, begin, continue, stop, finish.*

E.g. ... *I blesse the Lord, that He has over-ruled the harts of men, and I hope they goo now on well, to doo that greate worke they have in hand.* (CEECS, Harley; 1625–1666)

According to Scheibman (2002), studying the conventionalization of different patterns and of subjective forms requires us to look at “a range of combinations of grammatical and discursive elements and constructions that appear frequently in conversation” (Scheibman 2002: 60). The historical data from the HC and CEECS (see table 2 – raw figures are added in brackets) show that *well* is most likely to occur with the semantic field category of cognitive verbs. The HC and CEECS show a correlation with mental verbs amounting to 41.3 and 39.8 % respectively, compared to smaller percentages of correlation with activity verbs (36.4 and 31.4%).⁷ An additional comparison with present-day data (of verbs collocating with adverbial *well*) from the *British National Corpus* (BNC), however, presents a stronger correlation with activity verbs (56.1%) than with mental verbs (21.2).

7. The separate category of Verbal Adjectives (VAdj), although not included in the discussion, can be mentioned as a complementary set of data. VAdjs (e.g. *a well-ground powder, They are well pleased with their bishop, ... of those well-affected people*) can be considered as Predicative Adjectives, with verbal elements however. As such, they can also be categorized according to verb type. For the HC and CEECS respectively, VAdjs take up 36.5 % (72/197) and 72 % (90/125) of mental verbs – compared to 34 % (67/197) and 21.6 % (27/125) of activity verbs.

Table 2. Verbs modified by *well*: Semantic Field distribution in the HC, CEECS and BNC

Semantic Field	HC %	CEECS %	BNC %
Activity	36.4 (695)	31.4 (189)	56.1 (37)
Mental	41.3 (789)	39.8 (239)	21.2 (14)
Communication	11.3 (215)	13.5 (81)	9.1 (6)
Existence	7.1 (135)	9.1 (55)	7.6 (5)
Occurrence	3.3 (64)	5.1 (31)	3 (2)
Causative	0.3 (6)	0.2 (1)	–
Aspectual	0.1 (2)	0.5 (3)	–
Indefinite/Implicit	0.2 (3)	0.3 (2)	3 (2)
Total	100 (1909)	100 (601)	100 (66)

In table 3, a second comparison is presented with more general present-day data (i.e. figures of verb types without *well*-collocates) from Biber et al. (1999: 365). As in the BNC data, these percentages display the strongest correlation with activity verbs (also see Defour 2005 for a comparison between synchronic and diachronic corpus data).

Table 3. General semantic field distribution of verbs in synchronic data (Biber et al. 1999: 365)

Semantic Field	Biber et al. %
Activity	49
Mental	19
Communication	13
Existence	8
Occurrence	5
Causative	4
Aspectual	3
Indefinite/Implicit	–
Total	101 ⁸

The fact that historical uses of adverbial *well* collocate with mental verbs in such high percentages may be connected with the nature of the corpus texts. It is assumed that a higher level of interaction (for one particular genre) will result in a higher use of “subjective” linguistic items. Scheibman states that

8. No raw figures were given in Biber et al. (1999). In total, the percentages do not add up to an even hundred.

"language – in particular, spontaneous conversation – is subjective in that it is fundamentally used by speakers to express their perceptions, feelings, and opinions ..." (2002: 61). She establishes a connection between the communication of subjective attitudes and verb types by referring to the fact that, in her conversational data, verbs of cognition are the most frequently occurring verb class, in combination with first person singular subjects. This ties in with a general hypothesis saying that

linguistic elements that commonly appear in conversation should be those that participate in subjective expression There should also be greater co-occurrence of items whose combinations lend themselves to conveying speaker point of view than those whose combinations do not (e.g. after Benveniste 1971, verbs of cognition would more frequently appear with a first person singular subject than with a third person singular). In other words ... there should be associations between commonly occurring conversational material and semantic and pragmatic expression of subjectivity. (Scheibman 2002: 61)

Mental verbs, expressing "opinions, wants, and feelings, and [those] of other people" (Biber et al. 1999: 365), are a suitable medium for communicating perception and cognitive processes and may therefore serve a relevant function in the interactional frame. Biber et al. state that "mental verbs, especially *know*, *think*, *see*, *want*, and *mean*, are particularly common in conversation" (Biber et al. 1999: 378), and confirm that mental verbs seem to have a natural correlation with first and second person subject forms. Finally, Fitzmaurice (2004) also stresses that mental and modal verbs in particular are common grammatical resources for the expression of speaker self-expression – as in e.g. *you see*, *you know*, or *I believe*. It should be noted that, although the use of first person subject forms can be relevant for the development of subjective meanings, this does not necessarily indicate an evolution towards increasing subjectivity (cp. Scheibman 2002: 167; Traugott, this volume).

The historical corpus data confirm that the mental verbs with the highest frequency, i.e. *know*, *understand* and *remember*,⁹ occur most frequently

9. In both historical corpora, *know* has the highest frequency, followed by *do*. Apart from *know*, *understand* and *remember*, mental verbs *like*, *love* and *see* also appear in the list of most frequent verbs. However, these are verbs of emotion and perception, and the three cognitive verbs with the highest frequency were chosen because they are more likely to reflect the speaker's cognitive activities.

with *I* and *you* in collocation with *well*, as can be seen in table 4 below. Raw figures are added in brackets.¹⁰

Table 4. Percentages per corpus: Subjects of mental verbs modified by *well*:
a) *Know* b) *Understand* c) *Remember*

KNOW	I	You	They	He	She	It	We	Rest
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
CEECs (73)	35.6 (26)	32.9 (24)	8.2 (6)	11 (8)	4.1 (3)	– (3)	– (3)	8.2 (6)
HC (280)	33.9 (95)	25.4 (71)	8.2 (23)	18.6 (52)	2.5 (7)	0.7 (2)	2.5 (7)	8.2 (23)
UNDERSTAND	I	You	They	He	She	We	Rest	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
CEECs (20)	55 (11)	35 (7)	–	–	–	5 (1)	5 (1)	
HC (53)	11.3 (6)	35.8 (19)	7.5 (4)	24.5 (13)	– (5)	9.4 (5)	11.3 (6)	
REMEMBER	I	You	They	He	She	We	Rest	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
CEECs (15)	46.7 (7)	40 (6)	–	13.3 (2)	–	–	–	
HC (15)	66.7 (10)	20 (3)	–	13.3 (3)	–	–	–	

In contrast to cognitive verbs, activity verbs and communicative verbs from the HC and CEECS – such as *do* (table 5) or *greet* – present a more varied picture with regard to subject forms. Apart from these quantitative results, which show that historical uses of adverbial *well* mainly occur with cognitive verbs and first and second person subject forms, a qualitative study of the contexts in which this collocation occurs may attest whether *well* provides an additional pragmatic value in its co-occurrence with mental verbs and "interactive" subject forms.

10. The large differences between masculine and feminine third person singular forms may be context-dependent or depending on genre differences. Because of the small numbers of occurrence, more contexts would need to be examined in order to make further generalisations.

Table 5. Percentages per corpus: Subjects of activity verbs modified by *well*. Do

DO	I	You	They	He	She	It	We	Rest
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
CEECs (61)	8.2 (5)	54.1 (33)	3.3 (2)	18 (11)	3.3 (2)	-	-	13.1 (8)
HC (102)	2.9 (3)	29.4 (30)	15.7 (16)	22.5 (23)	4.9 (5)	3.9 (4)	6.9 (7)	13.7 (14)

4.2.2. *Mental collocations*

Although the meaning of *well* in phrases such as *as you well know* or *you well know that...* is mainly referential, Quirk et al. (1985) state that this type of formula (e.g. *as you (well) know; as you may know*) does not function as a mere reference to the hearer's cognition or to his or her knowledge of a fact or event, but rather serves as an appeal to the addressee, indicating that "he or she is not being underestimated" and that it is probable that he or she already knows the facts that are referred to. In that sense, a phrase such as *as you know* can serve as a help to acknowledge the hearer. Its use can prevent face loss and can keep the argumentational flow of a conversation going by integrating the addressee in the discourse frame. The collocation is not limited to second person subject forms. Examples in which a first person subject is combined with *well* and a verb of cognition (e.g. *I understand well that...*) can equally help to stress the speaker's assertion. The following examples may help to attest what exactly the added intertextual value of adverbial *well* is in a collocation of first or second person subject forms with mental verbs. Examples with a first person subject form will be discussed first (examples 25 and 26).

- (25) A: *I have nourished in thys place a grete wylye a serpente whych pleased me much.... And yestirday ye slew hym as he gaie hys prey. Sey me for what cause ye slew hym, for the lyon was nat yowres.*
 B: *Madam, I know well the lyon was nat myne, but for the lyon ys more of jantiller nature than the serpente, therefore I slew hym ...*
 (HC, *Criminalory* [Romances], 1420–1500) [adapted]
 A: 'For a long time I have nourished a serpent in this place, which pleased me much.... And yesterday you killed it as it was trying

to catch its prey. Tell me for what cause you slew it, for the lion was not yours.'

B: 'Madam, **I know well the lion was not mine**, but because the lion is of a more noble nature than the serpent, therefore I slew it ...'

- (26) *Her majestie I do remember well indeade, and so may you, howe before all my lords she seemed to mislike that I should take any other charge then as her generall....* (CEECs, Leicester, 1585–1586)

It appears that the contexts in which these formulas are used can all be explained in the larger frame of an argumentation. In example (25), for instance, the second speaker has to justify himself for killing a snake – which belonged to the first speaker. The situation poses a possible risk of face loss for speaker A. What we can see is that speaker B therefore starts by acknowledging his interlocutor and her claim (*I know well the lyon was nat myne*) before putting forward his own point of view. The reflection of the accusation diminishes a possible face-threat and allows the speaker to develop his line of reasoning. The additional use of *well* may play a role in this, in the sense that *well* presents an intensification of the speaker's assertion and seems to express a personal viewpoint of the speaker on the truth-value of his or her claim. *Well* as it appears in *I know well that...* can still be seen as a propositional adverb, modifying a lexical verb (as "in a good manner"), but the adverb seems to come close to a more intensified, episodic meaning, signifying *indeed* or *certainly*. This meaning is even explicitly added in example (26) (*I do remember well indeade*), indicating the speaker's judgement on the truth-value of the utterance.

In examples (27), (28) and (29), the use of a second person subject form explicitly acknowledges the addressee and similarly occurs in contexts where speaker and addressee have divergent views or where the speaker attempts to bring across his or her personal perspective. At the same time, these examples illustrate that the speaker wants to express a form of politeness. In each of the three excerpts, the writer addresses someone who can be considered socially high-ranked (cp. "your maystership", i.e. Thomas Stonor; "your Ladyship", i.e. Lady Jane Cornwallis; "Madam", i.e. Lady Bacon). The relationship between speaker and addressee will necessarily be affected by this. Positive attention is therefore given to the addressee's face, by presenting the given information as something that is shared already at the start of the utterance.

- (27) ..., which as your maystership knoweth well was right shortly warning, remembering that be more parte of my lordes servantes were sente into Suffolk ... (CEECS, Stonor, 1424–1483)
- ‘... which, as your mastership knows well, was right short notice, bearing in mind that the majority of my lord’s servants were sent to Suffolk ...’
- (28) I confesse I am not without some regrette that, eyther by [your Ladyship’s] election or my misfortune, it falls out at such a time when I am not soe much at liberty, as [your Ladyship] well knows, nor soe much master of myself. ... (CEECS, Cornwall; 1613–1644)
- (29) Surely, Madam, there is great reason, you very well know, that you should strayne yourself for the effecting of this mach, for, as I have often expressed ... (CEECS, Cornwall; 1613–1644)

A phrase such as *as your Ladyship well knows*... (28), for instance, urges the addressee to consider the validity of the speaker’s utterance. This ties in with Östman’s suggestions on the use of *you know*, saying that the speaker “does not indicate by *you know* that he wants the addressee to accept the truth of his proposition, but he wants the addressee to PRESUPPOSE the tenability of what he is saying” (Östman 1981: 18). While *you know well* can be used by a speaker to emphasize and attain a sense of common ground, certain examples seem to add a more critical sense to the proposition. In a context where speaker and addressee appear to have diverging expectations or points of view, the difference between *I/you know that*... and *I/you very well know that*... can illustrate an underlying implication (made by the speaker) which can be paraphrased as “I am not trying to pretend that I don’t know this” or “don’t (you) try to pretend that you don’t know this”. We can compare this with two phrases in Dutch in which a hearer is addressed, namely the neutral phrase “Je weet dat hij in Gent woont” (“You know he lives in Ghent”) versus “Je weet goed genoeg dat hij in Gent woont” (“You know well (enough) he lives in Ghent” – said when the addressee denies). The latter use of *you know* allows a speaker to

express (presumed) certainty (“as you know”): the speaker invokes a prior agreement as the source for the trustworthiness of what he is saying; and the addressee might be expected to believe the speaker. This use of *you know* is primarily a speaker-oriented, Face-Saving *you know*: by using the declarative *you know*, the speaker does not want to be argued against. (Östman 1981: 18)

The intensified positive meaning of adverbial *well* can in this sense be used to anticipate possible diverging opinions – which could undermine the truth-content of the utterance, to validate the utterance of the speaker, and to serve as a basis on which the speaker can tackle diverging opinions without creating face loss for the addressee (“I see what you’re saying. However...”). More so, the speaker creates an assumption of shared knowledge (or at least expresses the hope that the hearer will be brought to the same level of understanding). Although *well* is not an indispensable element in this mental collocation, the use of the adverb does provide an additional intensifying factor, and seems to play an important role in the positioning of the speaker, as well as in establishing common ground.

4.2.3. *Positional shift*: You know well that... ~ as you well know

The historical corpus data illustrate that the relationship between *well* and collocating verbs (e.g. with *to know*) is also subject to differences in position. The positional division used in this paper is taken from Quirk et al. (1985: § 8.15–8.23) and can be summarized as follows. An initial position (I) places the adverbial before all other clause elements (e.g. “*Suddenly*, the driver started the engine”). In contrast, an adverbial can follow all other obligatory elements in End Position (E); e.g. “The light was fading *rapidly*”, or can be placed after Subject and Verb but still followed by an obligatory element, i.e. Initial End position – as in “She kept writing *in feverish rage* long, violent letters of complaint”. Medial position (M) (Quirk et al. 1985: 492) places the adverb between Subject and (finite lexical) verb (“The driver *suddenly* started the engine”) or after the first auxiliary or the verb *to be* (“She hadn’t *really* delighted her audience”). Two variants of M are the Initial Medial position (IM; “She *really* hadn’t delighted her audience”) and End Medial (eM; “The room must have been *quite carefully* searched”).

The variation between *you understand well*, with *well* in Final position, and *you well understand*, with *well* in Medial position, may lead us to wonder whether this difference has a correlated influence on the meaning of the collocation, and whether the position which *well* has in relation to the main verb can serve as a syntactic criterion for determining pragmatic meaning. Tables 6 and 7 below indicate the historical evolution of the position of *well* in the HC and CEECS – as a verbal modifier of mental verbs, categorized according to three main time periods.

Table 6. CEECS: *know* + *well*: percentages (and raw figures) of the position of *well*

CEECS	1400–1500	1500–1600	1600–1680
Initial	2.1 (1)	–	–
Medial	16.7 (8)	60 (6)	43.75 (7)
Final	39.6 (19)	30 (3)	25 (4)
Initial End	41.7 (20)	10 (1)	31.25 (5)
Total	100.1 (48)	100 (10)	100 (16)

Table 7. HC: *know* + *well*: percentages (and raw figures) of the position of *well*

HC	850 950	950 1050	1150 1250	1250 1350	1350 1420	1420 1500	1500 1570	1570 1640	1640 1710
Initial	100 (1)	–	22.7 (5)	29.2 (7)	18.75 (15)	9.6 (8)	2.8 (1)	–	–
Medial	–	100 (1)	9.1 (2)	8.3 (2)	11.25 (9)	8.4 (7)	38.9 (14)	42.9 (6)	21.1 (4)
End	–	–	–	–	1.25 (1)	1.2 (1)	–	–	–
Medial	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Final	–	–	27.3 (6)	29.2 (7)	15 (12)	16.9 (14)	38.9 (14)	28.6 (4)	52.6 (10)
Initial	–	–	36.4 (8)	33.3 (8)	53.75 (43)	63.9 (53)	19.4 (7)	28.6 (4)	26.3 (5)
End	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Rest	–	–	4.5 (1)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	100 (1)	100 (1)	100 (22)	100 (24)	100 (80)	100 (83)	100 (36)	100 (14)	100 (19)

Hoye (1997: 149) noted that Medial position is more usually associated with modality and degree – but whereas we can observe a tentative shift from Final (*you know well*) towards “intensified” Medial position (*you well know*) in the CEECS, the HC presents more varied results (table 7) and shows an increase for both Medial and Final position. The distinction between activity verbs and mental verbs, collocating with *well* in the historical data, made no relevant difference in terms of positional restrictions or evolutions.

A comparison with present-day data from the BNC shows that, while the co-occurrence of pragmatic *well* with *know* does not undergo a strict positional shift from Final to Medial position, the combination as a whole

becomes subject to a structural change which can be situated on a broader syntactic level. A data sample from the BNC illustrates that *well* in collocation with *know* frequently (43%) and increasingly occurs as a parenthetical remark, introduced by *as* (e.g. *as you well know; as you know right well*).

The development of such parenthetical remarks has been dealt with quite extensively in the literature. Three hypotheses have been suggested for the grammaticalization of epistemic parentheticals such as *I mean, you know, I think* or *I guess*. For the evolution of *I think/methinks*, for instance, Palander-Collin suggests a development from a following *that*-clause (*I think that he will win*) to a *that*-less clause (*I think he will win*) and finally to a structure where *I think* can be postponed as an epistemic parenthetical, after the proposition (*He will win, I think*) (Palander-Collin 1999, in Brinton 2003: 9). An alternative development has been suggested for *I think* and *I guess* and related parentheticals (Brinton 1996), starting from a relative structure (e.g. *as/so/which I mean*) and evolving towards deletion of the relative pronoun and to “a change in status...from adjunct to disjunct” (Brinton 2003: 10). A third hypothesized evolution – suggested for the development of *I mean* (Brinton 2003) – entails that *I mean* initially “governs a phrasal element {NP, VP, AP, PP, AdvP}” (2003: 12). The connection with this element is gradually loosened, and allows for *I mean* to be postponed and reanalysed as an independent element. For the development of *you know well*, our historical data show that the combination of *you* and *know* is initially followed by a noun phrase (with pronoun: example 30), a *that*-clause (example 31), or a subordinated interrogative clause (example 32).

- (30) *purth þat Godd wass wurpenn mann forr ure miccle nede, þurth þat wass he, þat with tu wel, all wiþþ hiss lefe wille niþpredð & wansedd wurmdertlig ...* (HC, Cmorn [Homilies]: 1150–1250) [adapted]

‘because God had become man for our great need, through that he was, **you know [that] well**, humbled and greatly diminished at through his will ...’

- (31) *þou wostful wel, yif þu wilt wite, þat Ætelwold be ðide site on knes and sweren on messe-bok ... þat þou tise donhter sholdest yelde ...* (HC, Cmhavele [Romances]: 1250–1350)

‘**You know full well**, if you want to know, **that** Ætelwold made you sit on your knees and swear on the missal ... that you would (lit. should) hand over his daughter...’

- (32) "Guode woman, " seide þe holie man: "**þou wost wel how it is, þat þei chief lowerd habbe þe beste ayte**: ...". (HC, Cmseleg [Biographies, saint's lives]: 1250–1350)
 "Good woman", said the holy man: "**you know well how it is, that the highest ruler has the most valuable possession**: ...".¹¹

In these early sentences, *know well* has a concrete referential meaning, and appears to have limited scope. In later periods, we can see an increase in the use of *you know well* as a parenthetical construction, which may or may not be introduced by *as* (examples 33–36).¹¹

- (33) ... *ant sire Iohan Abel, mo y mihte telle by tale, hope of grete ant of smale, ye knownen styþe wel*. (HC, Cmpoemh [History]: 1250–1350)
 '... and sir Iohan Abel, I might tell more through story, both of great and of small, **you know very well**.'
 (34) *þu hast a garnement wel iweve adoun to þi foot, in whiche þyn husbounde Crist wil haue gret byþynge to fynde þe icloped in. An hemme, as þu wost wel, is þe laste ende of a cloþ* ... (HC, Cmaelr3 [Rules]: 1350–1420)
 'You have a garment well woven down to your foot, in which your husband Christ will be pleased to see you dressed. A hem, **as you know well**, is the last end of a piece of cloth ...'
 (35) *It is well done ye remembre hym off them ffor diverse conseruacions, as ye know bothe right well*. (HC, Cmprii [Private letters]: 1420–1500)
 'It is well done (if) you remind him of them for diverse reasons, **as you both know right well**.'
 (36) *He that doth procure another Man to commit a Felonie or a Murther, I am sure you know well ynough, the Law doth adjudge the Procurer there, a Felon or a Murtherer*. (HC, Cetri1 [Proceedings, trials]: 1500–1570)

These examples illustrate the fact that the combination of a mental verb with *well* and a first or second person subject form appears to become in-

11. As can be seen in examples (33) to (36) among others, the combination of *know* and *well* is frequently complemented by a premodifying or postmodifying element which lends added strength to the assertion. Examples are *you know very well, you know right well, or I know well enough*.

creasingly detached from the internal clause structure, and gradually becomes more fixed as a parenthetical collocation with greater positional freedom. A preliminary comparison with contemporary material from the BNC shows that this construction has become even more fixed in present-day use. However, more research is necessary in order to be able to map exact figures and possible evolutions. The combination of *well* with mental verbs and with what can be called "interactional" subject forms diachronically forms a variety of different layers of meaning – which range from propositional uses to more intensifying meanings that can be applied when speaker and addressee have diverging points of view and want to find a source of shared understanding. In addition, this is structurally reflected in the co-existence of parenthetical uses with sentence-integrated structures.

4.3. Modal collocations

4.3.1. Well with epistemic modals

A second collocation occurring frequently in the historical data from the HC and CEECS is the combination of *well* with modal auxiliaries, as illustrated in the examples below.

- (37) *Myr. Coosin, you may well thinke that I wonder at these proceedings in the College*. (CEECS, Cosin, 1617–1669)
 (38) *I cannot but bee extremely troubled at my one misfortune, in that it appears to you (and I confesse it may verie well appeare so) that I am the worst of children to the best of mothers*. (CEECS, Cornwall, 1613–1644)
 (39) *My wit is short, ye may wel understonde*. (HC, Cnctvers [Fiction], 1350–1420)
 'My wit is short, **you may well understand**.'
 (40) *I fere me he cannot well shew them to your mastership*. (CEECS, Stonor, 1424–1483)
 'I fear (that) **he cannot well show** them to your mastership.'

The frequent appearance of the combination of *well* with modal auxiliary verbs in the historical data is reminiscent of an Old English example mentioned by Traugott and Dasher (2002), in which the use of *well* is shown to illustrate the subjectification of adverbial *well*.

- (41) *Cweð he: Wel þæt swa mæg forþon hi englice answere habbað.*
 'He said: **Well** that **may** (be) so, because they have angelic faces.'
 (?900 Bede, ii.i. [Schipper] 110 [Jucker 1997: 100], in Traugott and Dasher 2002: 175)

Example (41) portrays *well* as an element which can hardly be seen as a propositional modifier but rather as an element which has evolved towards a more epistemic meaning – which can be paraphrased as 'indeed' or 'certainly'. Placed in utterance-initial position, and as early as the Old English period, *well* can be attributed with an increased level of epistemic modality,¹² which is, according to Høye's definition (1997: 42–43),

concerned with matters of knowledge or belief on which basis speakers express their judgements about states of affairs, events or actions. [The speaker is] not making statements of fact or categorical assertions but conveying his subjective view of the world.

The combination of *well* with epistemic *may* is by far the most frequent modal collocation in the historical material from the HC and CEECS, taking up more than 75% (HC) and 60% (CEECS) respectively. Table 8 presents an overview of the epistemic modals collocating with *well* in the respective corpora.

Table 8. Most frequent modals in collocation with *well*: percentages per corpus

Modals	CEECS		HC	
May	61.1	(22)	75.3	(73)
Might	22.2	(8)	13.4	(13)
Can	13.9	(5)	1	(1)
Shall	2.8	(1)	6.2	(6)
Ought (to)	–	–	2.1	(2)
Would	–	–	1	(1)
Birde (= ought to)	–	–	1	(1)
Total	100	(36)	100	(97)

12. Both Goossens (1982) and Bybee (1988) state that "clear epistemic meanings are hard to find out in Middle English" (Goossens 1982: 78). In many cases, the interpretation depends on semantic context – mark, for instance, the ambiguity in "...he must extraordinarily *well* know paintings". Because of the ambiguity with regard to modals in historical data, all entries were classified on a case-by-case basis in order to distinguish between tokens illustrating deontic and epistemic modality.

May well has turned into a fixed idiom in present-day English. Shibasaki states that it is "the most frequently used expression in the modal verb-adverb construction, synchronically and diachronically" (2003: 400). The collocation is invariable and an example of "semantic harmonization", which entails that *may* and *well* are semantically within the same scope of modality, and that their co-occurrence creates a stronger level of epistemicity than the sum of the two individual elements. Høye (1997: 240) indicates that the combination of *well* and *may* not only creates an intensification of the modal, but a transformation of its meaning. Whereas the unmodified modal signifies possibility (example 42), the combination with *well* conveys probability (43).

- (42) *it may / might / can / could* Ø *be true that he beat her*
 (43) *it may / might / can / could well be true that he beat her*
 (Quirk et al. 1985: 588)

The value of *well* in this type of restricted modal environment (*may well*) lies in the fact that

well signifies a transformation in the epistemic value of the auxiliary, which ... alters the status of the speaker's attitude and commitment towards the 'known facts'. (Høye 1997: 210)

Whereas the use of *may* represents the speaker's subjective view on the probability or truth-value of a propositional fact or an utterance, the supplementary use of *well* "additionally lends weight to the force of the speaker's argument" (Høye 1997: 144), creating an environment in which not only the contents of the utterance are given a greater truth-value but also the subjective view of the speaker is credited with additional authority.

4.3.2. Position

The Old English example mentioned by Traugott and Dasher (example 41) places *well* in utterance-initial position (*Well that may be so*). Although this use needs to be distinguished from pragmatic marker-uses in which *well* is also placed utterance-initially (as in *Well, that may be so...*), the fact that *well* has initial position in this example may tell us something about the historical evolution and positional value of *well* in this modal collocation. *Well may*... (Initial; e.g. example 44) needs to be differentiated from the related collocational string *may well* (Medial; e.g. 45).

- (44) *For out of a mans hert es broght al-kins evil, als idell thoght of man-slaughter and avowry, fornicaciouns and felony Wele ge may wynthink gow pan pat pise er pat pat fles a man.* (HC, Cmorhom [Homilies], 1350–1420)

'For out of a man's heart is brought all kinds of evil, such as vain thoughts of manslaughter and adultery, fornications and treachery, **Well you may consider then** that these are the things that render a man morally corrupt.'

- (45) ... *layeth a very great obligation upon me to returne you my most thankfull acknowledgment of your special kinndes It may well be that I am in this particular likewise beholden to Mr. Gayers, of whose generous freedom and bonite I have had divers testimonies heretofore.* (CEECS, Cosin; 1617–1669)

Hoye stresses that, in present-day English, the former (with *well* preceding the modal auxiliary) breaks the unity of meaning that *may well* has, and "more clearly carries the independent meanings of its constituent items and denotes 'indeed possible'" (1997: 233). This kind of correlation between syntax and meaning can also be seen in *can't possibly* versus *possibly...can't*. Both *may well* and *can't possibly* respectively indicate probability and impossibility (negative certainty) and form a collocational unit where the adverb strengthens the sense of (un)certainly expressed by the modal auxiliary. In the case of *possibly can't* (as with *well may*), the adverb adds propositional meaning and changes the content of the collocational string. The positive sense of adverbial *well* seems intensified when placed in initial position, and in the Old English example (example 41), the position of *well* provides additional strength to the speaker's personal assertion and

[renders] the speaker's assertion all the more forceful and ... can be used in a manipulative sense 'to seduce the addressee into believing the content of the proposition' (Hoye 1997: 213).

Historically, the position of *well* with regard to the collocating modal auxiliary undergoes an evolution towards an increased use of Medial position. In the material from the CEECS, all 22 tokens of *well* (in collocation with *may*) are placed in Medial position (including one *em* token in the period 1566–1638). The HC-data (table 9 and figure 1) show a more varied picture.

Table 9. HC: *Well* + *may*: positions of *well* (per period)

Period	Total/ period	I	M	iM	eM	iE
850–950	3	33.3 (1)	66.7 (2)	–	–	–
950–1050	2	–	50 (1)	50 (1)	–	–
1150–1250	9	33.3 (3)	44.4 (4)	22.2 (2)	–	–
1250–1350	2	50 (1)	50 (1)	–	–	–
1350–1420	17	11.8 (2)	82.3 (14)	–	5.9 (1)	–
1420–1500	19	10.5 (2)	89.5 (17)	–	–	–
1500–1570	9	–	88.9 (8)	–	–	11.1 (1)
1570–1640	9	–	100 (9)	–	–	–
1640–1710	3	–	100 (3)	–	–	–
Total	73	(9)	(59)	(3)	(1)	(1)

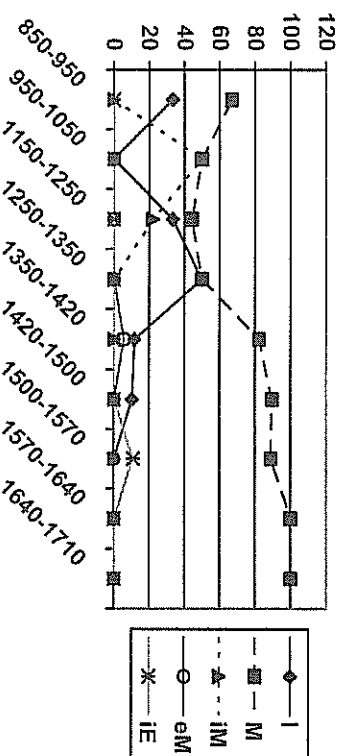


Figure 1. HC: *Well* + *may*: positions of *well* (per period)

We can see that there is a general – although not absolute – tendency for *well* to occur in Medial position (88.8% of all historical tokens), and that there are increasingly fewer collocations in which *well* appears utterance-initially. It must be kept in mind that these tendencies are based on a relatively small number of occurrences, and that percentages therefore indicate general directions rather than straightforward theoretical evolutions. The graph illustrates that *well* and *may* evolve towards an increasingly fixed collocation, in which *well* follows and specifies the modal verb head. The use of adverbial *well* as it appears in this modal collocation (e.g. *as you may well know*) shows an evolution towards semantic reduction, a high

level of dependency on the modal verb head – strengthening the epistemic character of *well* – and a high degree of integration in the clause – which indicates an advanced progression in the process of grammaticalization. These factors are indications that *well* could be treated as a modal particle (see Høye 1997: 209). Modal particles (MP) are related to pragmatic markers and work on similar levels. Modal particles and pragmatic markers both have an evaluative and interpersonal significance (e.g. Weydt 1969; Hansen 1998). Although there is no clear consensus about their exact definitions, we can say that modal particles focus more on the speaker's stance, the speaker's relationship with the addressee, pragmatic politeness strategies (see Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg 2003), background assumptions and the concern of creating shared knowledge in conversation. MPs can be seen as a subset of pragmatic markers and are said to “sit in between” propositional content and interaction-related functions of language” (Waltereit 2005). Høye states that modal particles help to “characterize and promote the speaker's version of the world which is then offered to or imposed on others” (1997: 67). In English, modal particles are uncommon and according to most researchers even non-existent. However, in other languages we can find modal particles which behave similarly to *well* (at least in particular restricted contexts), for instance the German MPs *ja* and *dann* (Abraham 1984), the Swedish *väl* (‘surely’) or *ju* (‘as you know’) – also see Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg 2003 – and *vel* in Norwegian¹³ (see Johansson 2006). Johansson refers to examples where *well* is translated by *vel* in its function as modal particle and has the meaning of ‘I suppose’. In contrastive research, *ju*, for instance, is found as a translation of *well* in the context of an ongoing argumentation. *Ja...ju* not only lexically shares the positive meaning of *well*, but is also considered to be an “obviousness particle (‘as you know’) with a rhetorical, argumentative character” (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg 2003: 1140) – which can be compared with our findings that, in certain restricted contexts, *well* can be used by the speaker to defend a particular viewpoint and at the same time to acknowledge a possible “conflict of interests”. In this historical collocation of *well* and *may* it becomes apparent that the propositional adverb *well* (in a good manner) has evolved to a meaning that is weakened semantically but strengthened pragmatically and epistemically. The use of *well* as the “satellite” of

13. In initial position, Norwegian *vel* and English *well* can both express agreement, disagreement or qualified agreement. Both can be found in dialogues as well as in monologues – representing a person's thought. *Vel*, however, covers a more restricted area of use than *well* (Johansson 2006: 118–121).

a modal auxiliary such as *may* allows the speaker to give additional strength to a subjective evaluation and supports the speaker's authority to claim that something may or may not be the case.

5. Conclusion

From a historical perspective, various propositional uses of *well* can be seen as a source for further semantic-pragmatic development. Placed in utterance-initial position, the inherent positive meaning of *well* can indicate the acceptance of a situation – and thus serves as a starting-point for the historical development of increasingly pragmatic and (inter)subjective meanings. Diachronic material from the HC and CEECS illustrates that non-initial uses of *well* can similarly display different levels of delexicalization or intensification, depending on collocating subjects and/or verbs. In collocation with cognitive verbs and a first or second person subject (e.g. *as you well know*), adverbial *well* can serve as a means to strengthen the positioning of the speaker and to establish a source of common ground with the addressee in contexts where both interactants have diverging opinions. Syntactically, the combination of *well* with mental verbs seems to have evolved towards an independent parenthetical structure, with a broader scope (*as/which you know well*). *Well* displays an advanced level of delexicalization and syntactic dependency in collocation with modal auxiliaries. In combination with epistemic *may* in particular, *well* conveys an increased level of modality and subjectivity, allowing the speaker to give additional strength to his or her opinion on the truth of an utterance (*as you may well know*).

Propositional meanings of *well* remain visible in later pragmatic and epistemic uses of the marker, even in advanced stages of grammaticalization and (inter)subjectification. Although we cannot establish a straightforward connection between intensified collocations in which *well* plays a defining role and utterance-initial pragmatic uses of *well*, we can, however, consider the possibility that these various uses – with different levels of epistemic or subjective strength – are the result of diverging developments. As such, different polysemous uses of *well* co-exist, but each has a specific semantic-pragmatic context in which they can be applied. As a common denominator, the element of acceptance inherent in adverbial *well* can be seen to be increasingly “recruited” in contexts where speaker and addressee need a

means to express speaker attitude, and to establish a greater interactional understanding between different interactants.

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